

## 2010, the international year of crocodile tears

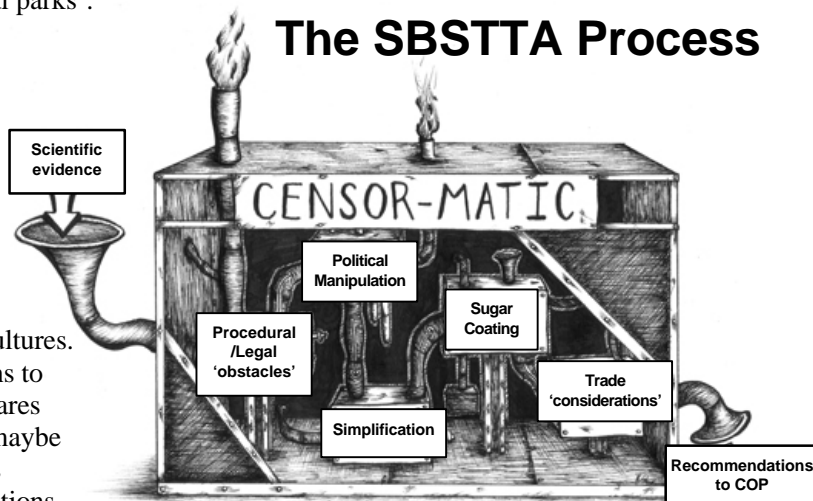
*Jessica Dempsey, CBD Alliance and Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition*

There is no doubt we are in a global mess. In his opening address on Monday, *one of the carefully selected conference VIPs* focused on the plight of Indonesia's Orangutan. He asked us: why care about the Orangutan? While that may be an interesting philosophical question, there are more important questions, especially - how are we going to stop this madness? In the *Last Stand of the Orangutan - State of emergency: illegal logging, fire and palm oil in Indonesia's national parks*, produced by UNEP, the drivers of deforestation and the loss of Orangutan habitat are listed as: illegal logging, forest fires including those associated with the rapid spread of oil palm plantations, illegal hunting and trade. In 2002, it was estimated that Indonesian rainforest would disappear by 2032. But due to the rate of deforestation over the past five years and the recent widespread investment in oil palm plantations and biodiesel refineries, recent estimates suggest that 98% of the forest may be destroyed by 2022. As has been made clear this week, this deforestation contributes directly to climate change. Indeed, Indonesia's carbon emissions are the third highest in the world, due primarily to deforestation.

While this was written before conclusions on biofuels on Thursday, the situation in Indonesia demonstrates is why the CBD must take action on biofuels. It is been incredibly frustrating to see the discussion on agrofuels postponed, and the actions of some parties (or maybe just one Party, you know, a country famous for soccer, caipirinhas and non-constructive behaviour at international meetings and is kindly advised by the three "scientists" of Syngenta on its delegation) to move this issue to COP 10. That, of course, is an astonishing proposal in the light of the clear commitment of caipirinha-drinkers and others that biodiversity loss should be halted in 2010. How can we halt biodiversity loss if we only start studying what will probably be the main driver of biodiversity loss in the years to come in 2010? If we do not even start to address these new and emerging threats to biodiversity, then what is the 2010 target all about? Is the 2010 target just an excuse to drown ourselves in buckets of crocodile tears four years from now?

Back to the question of how are we going to stop this madness. Suggestions in the UNEP report demonstrate *exactly the wrong approach* to these problems. They recommend that Indonesia and other countries work on, and we paraphrase, 'substantially strengthening the Indonesian initiative of Ranger Quick Response Units (SPORC) ... to ensure the necessary para-military skills and equipment for securing national parks'.

The plight of the Orangutan is incredibly dire – but increasing arms, helicopters, and paramilitary skills does absolutely NOTHING to deal with the systematic issues at hand. There is no way we will be able to protect cute apes, lovely forests, or ordinary people if we do not address the underlying causes of forest loss RIGHT HERE AND NOW, and adopt a precautionary approach to the Big Brazilian Bio-industry driven agenda of converting millions of hectares of precious ecosystems into oceans of monocultures. What is the need for para-military when Indonesia plans to expand monocultures for biofuels by 5.25 million hectares now, and by 20 million hectares in coming years? Or maybe these para-military are needed to defend monocultures against people, like they defend oilpalm and soy plantations against local communities reclaiming the land that was ruthlessly stolen from them in countries like Colombia and Paraguay. Any policies to conserve biodiversity beyond 2010 will only be upheld by conviction and belief in those policies and practices, not through the use of force and the use of \$\$, but by respecting rights and practicing true democratic participation.



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### Today's ECO

1. 2010 + crocodile tears
2. Certification-agrofuels + Tourism-climate
3. Foreshadowing Agricultural Biodiv.
4. SBSTTA notes

**ECO thanks Swedbio for their on-going support!**

# Certification and Agrofuels- recipe for disaster?

Wally Menne, Timberwatch South Africa

The South African timber industry has promoted large-scale alien tree plantations for more than a century. While initially plantations were advocated as a solution to local demand and to reduce imports, the South African timber industry now largely caters to exporting pulp and paper.

Land under plantations is estimated to be approximately 1,5 million hectares with 1,6 million hectares invaded by 'feral' plantation trees. In response to Climate Change, the timber sector has argued that its trees sequester carbon and uses this to justify expansion. Meanwhile, the South African government continues to demand another 200 000 hectares of timber on community lands in the Eastern Cape. Another 3 million hectares has been 'earmarked' for large-scale genetically engineered maize and canola.

## *Certifying plantation problems*

The timber industry in South Africa sees FSC certification as a way to achieve 'self-regulation', and the government, citing its own department's lack of capacity as justification, has welcomed this. When established in 1994, it was not envisaged that the FSC system would one day serve to justify all the problems it was intended to solve, and has granted respectability to many negative aspects of timber industry operations – including:

- Community displacement, and land dispossession;
- Destruction of biodiversity resources and the natural landscape;
- Impacts on water resources - drying out wetlands and aquifers;
- Pollution of water with pesticides, lubricants and fertilizers;
- Contamination and compaction of soil within plantation areas;
- Accelerated topsoil loss and increased downstream erosion.

The FSC has in fact legitimised these social and ecological inequities by certifying 80% of South Africa's timber plantations as 'responsibly managed FORESTS'. It has also legitimised the negative health, environmental and social impacts produced when timber is processed at polluting factories that are usually close to water resources and human settlements. There is now a growing realization that fossil fuel energy consumption and high greenhouse gas emissions of the timber processing industry actually contribute to global climate change. In April 2006 an

international group of NGOs called on FSC to de-certify all controversial plantations including those in South Africa.

In South Africa, FSC certification of such plantations only perpetuate the inequitable relationship between industry players and affected communities. The plantation industry still sticks to its claims that timber plantations create new employment and uplift rural communities when in effect job losses are common when individually owned and managed farming enterprises are replaced with timber plantations.

## *Certifying large-scale agrofuel crops*

The South African national biofuels strategy appears to be based on the large-scale model in countries like the United States and Brasil. This is based on high energy-input mechanised production that also requires large applications of agricultural chemicals derived from fossil-oil and coal. In Europe and the United States, subsidies have been necessary to make this system viable. However, with the great power and influence industrialised nations have in the south, the corporate entities involved would like to expand their control over the land and resources of countries like India, South Africa, Mozambique and Paraguay. Industrialised countries see the large-scale production of agrofuels as a means to be able to continue increasing energy consumption, rather than adopting energy-efficient solutions.

Clearly this approach cannot be maintained beyond the medium term, and will drive an ongoing one-way flow of resources from the south to the north. The system of certification used by the FSC fails to resolve the problems inherent to large-scale industrial production of timber. It is therefore highly probable that if such a certification system were applied to agrofuels, it would fall down in much the same way. Northern over-consumption is where the problem really lies. Certification is often proposed as a panacea for all the negative impacts of agrofuels. But from the South African experience, it is clear that FSC-like standards are part of the problem, not the answer. Large-scale 'certified' agrofuel crop cultivation on community land is unlikely to be any different!

## The Climate Change, Tourism and Biodiversity Nexus

Liyakhat Syed, Equations

Everyone loves a holiday. But yet, even conservative organizations like the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) – who promote tourism – are sending out warnings about the complex relationship between tourism and climate change, the existing and rapidly worsening impact of climate change on tourism development in sensitive ecosystems, and also the contribution of tourism industry to climate change. In 2003, UNWTO called for response on these issues from different sectors such as national governments, tourism companies, academic institutions, NGOs and private and public sectors in the form of the Djerba Declaration (2003).

The tourism industry itself is a contributor to climate change by generating greenhouse gas emissions through travellers' consumption of transport services, notably road and air transport, and high levels of energy consumption like air conditioning, heating and lighting in tourism establishments. The aviation industry is the biggest threat as it is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gases, growing at a rate of 5% per year and contributing to 3% of global emissions. Air travel, particularly long haul international flights emitting greenhouse gases at high cruising altitudes, adds substantially to climate change effects. The tourism industry is notorious for high per capita consumption

of water, poor energy efficiency, waste management issues and serious negative environmental impacts.

The relentless expansion of the tourism industry should be a major cause for concern for the CBD. Tourism continues to pervade coasts and islands, especially in the developing nations, leading to undesirable impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity. Despite this, CBD policy decisions continue to promote tourism as a market based conservation mechanism in coastal and island ecosystems without application of the precautionary principle (as argued by the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus at COP 8).

Firstly, we call upon the tourism industry to take on the challenge of an authentic response to the climate change crisis by implementing measures to reduce energy consumption in tourism establishments by employing energy-efficient and appropriate green technologies. Secondly, there is an urgent need for governments to see the travel industry as a significant contributor to climate change, and take the necessary policies and regulatory mechanisms. We recognise that this will require a significant transformation of current forms of mass tourism, much to the chagrin of heat-seeking Europeans seeking an actual 'summer'.

# Agricultural Biodiversity on the line

Patrick Mulvany

In the face of food crises, climate change and the agrofuel craze that is further intensifying the monocult and the rapid enclosure of peoples' resources, agricultural biodiversity is 'on the line'.

The global governance systems, notably the CBD and FAO, that should defend diversity and the right of local people to control their agricultural biodiversity are on trial. In the run-up to MOP 4 / COP 9 next year, we need to challenge them to expose the unsustainability of industrial agricultural systems that capture ecosystems, livelihoods and markets – and pervert these to serve corporate interests – destroying agricultural biodiversity in the process.

CBD and FAO should, instead, be defending an agriculture of the people that cannot be appropriated. One that provides: healthy foods especially for local markets; secure livelihoods; dynamic, diverse ecosystems that can adapt to new stresses such as the increased disease and climatic threats due to global warming; and a vital rural and coastal environment for all peoples – in effect defending food sovereignty. This requires local control over agricultural biodiversity.

Agricultural biodiversity underpins all production; without it there can be no sustainable production in any system. It encompasses the variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms which are necessary to sustain key functions of the agro-ecosystem, its structure and processes for, and in support of, food production and food security. Thus it includes not only the species that provide our food, but also the species such as pollinators, predators, soil biota and aquatic species that keep agroecosystems healthy.

But the current emphasis, within the MOP / COP process on industrial food systems, privatisation of genes and nature and genetic engineering is leading us to complete dependency and corporate control over our foods, seeds, livestock, fish and biodiversity in general and, thus, threatens agricultural biodiversity.

Agricultural biodiversity is a key theme at SBSTTA 13 and COP 9. The Programme of Work, with its focus on adaptive management and capacity building, will be under review. This PoW (from Decision V/5) was built on the landmark Decision III/11 taken in Buenos Aires in 1996. Annex 1 to that decision describes the basis for CBD/COP actions on agricultural biodiversity. In that Decision, Parties presciently recognised that

*“...the living organisms which constitute agricultural biodiversity play an important role in the resilience of all natural, life-support processes. They are essential agents for, inter alia, nitrogen, carbon, energy and water cycles. Moreover, the species composition and their relationships will affect the functioning and yields of agricultural ecosystems themselves. A diverse environment also offers a shield for agricultural ecosystems against perturbations, natural or man-made, contributing to their resilience and that of their surrounding ecosystems.”* COP III/11 Annex 1

Will COP 9 act to defend agricultural biodiversity? And will COP 9 also defend food sovereignty of the farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples

and others who have developed and manage agricultural biodiversity – Food Sovereignty that: Focuses on Food for People; Values Food Providers; Localises Food Systems; Puts Control Locally; Builds Knowledge and Skills; and Works with Nature? (*Synthesis Report, Nyéléni 2007 - Forum for Food Sovereignty [www.nyeleni2007.org](http://www.nyeleni2007.org)*)

Civil society will. And we will challenge Parties to ensure local control over agricultural biodiversity – instead of embracing agrofuels; ensure Farmers' Rights and Livestock Keepers' Rights – instead of facilitating the appropriation and privatisation of their resources; ban Terminator technologies and other GURTS – instead of caving in to corporate pressures; and ensure that owners of the genes in modified plants and animals are fully liable for any negative impacts or outcomes – instead of promoting GMOs.

For more detail on these issues, see [www.ukabc.org](http://www.ukabc.org)

## Caipirinha-drinker speaks....

On Wednesday July 4 Brazilian President Lula noted that Biofuels will help reduce the global gap between rich and poor nations by making many developing countries energy exporters.

Meanwhile, at the same 'international conference on biofuels' EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson said the EU could not allow the switch to biofuels to become “an environmentally unsustainable stampede in the developing world”... Become unsustainable?

## 2010 tears continued from p 1

As Miguel Lovera, chairperson of the Global Forest Coalition, writes in Forest Cover no. 22: “The two most dangerous maladies I have seen in my life so far are, without a doubt, the renewed wave of authoritarianism that swept around the world after 9/11, and the advent of climate change. The first came at a time when democracy and the rules of law were being advanced worldwide. The events of 9/11 suddenly gave the representatives of authoritarian ideology just the excuse they needed to tighten their grip and reverse human rights and civil liberties...Climate change is also a menace that threatens us all...But, as in the case of the fight against terrorism, the mitigation options approved by some of the most powerful world leaders are often false solutions, in turn having grave negative impacts on people and the environments we all depend on”. For example, losing Indonesia's rainforests and peatlands (and in turn, the Orangutan) will accelerate global warming and could release up to fifty tons of carbon into the atmosphere, which is the equivalent of over six years of global fossil fuel emissions!

This is why we need a precautionary approach on agrofuels. Only by halting big agri-oil monocultures (*not* paramilitary 'protection') will we have a chance of meeting the 2010 target.

# SBSTTA Notes

## **African Bio-fuels conference jumps the gun!**

Civil Society delegates at CBD SBSTTA 12 have learned with concern that a seminar to be held in Addis Ababa at the end of this month will be promoting bio-fuel projects in Africa. A notice advertising the meeting being convened by the AU (African Union) and the UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation), makes a number of statements that appear to assume that it is a foregone conclusion that these kinds of biofuels projects will automatically result in success. The conference key objectives are given as to:

- “Raise key stakeholders’ awareness of the potential and trade-offs of biofuels”
- “Develop a common plan of action on promoting biofuels in Africa”
- “Promote exchange of experiences and lessons learnt in developing biofuels between Brazil and Africa”
- “Develop a pipeline of biofuels projects”

It is hoped that the CBD secretariat will respond appropriately to this situation and make contact with its sister organisation UNIDO immediately, to send the message that the socio-economic and environmental impacts should be established before further developments take place.

## **How will Synthetic Life Affect Biodiversity & the CBD?**

*ETC Group*

In October 2006, The Venter Institute - named for its founder J. Craig Venter, the scientist who led the private sector race to map the human genome – applied for worldwide patents on the first fully synthetic organism. The researchers christened their microbe birthed in the lab *Mycoplasma laboratorium*. The patent applications claim exclusive ownership of a set of essential genes and a synthetic “free-living organism that can grow and replicate” containing those genes. While the Venter Institute hasn’t yet achieved what it has claimed in the patent, researchers are well on the way.

Just last month (June 2007), Venter Institute researchers reported in *Science* that they had successfully replaced the genetic material of one bacterial species with the genetic material of another bacterial species. The experiment demonstrated that it is possible to insert a foreign genome into a cell, delete the cell’s native genetic material, and hijack the cell’s machinery to allow the cell to survive and even replicate. The next step *en route* to fully synthetic life is to repeat

the process inserting completely tailor-made DNA, such as the genome of *Mycoplasma laboratorium*.

The new field of synthetic biology is “extreme genetic engineering.” Instead of transferring small sections of DNA between existing organisms – the kind of genetic engineering we’ve seen over the last three decades – synthetic biology attempts to create entire genomes from scratch, using generic “parts” cobbled together. Scientists, like Craig Venter, who were once satisfied with *reading* genomes have decided it’s more interesting to *write* them.

Advocates promoting synthetic biology claim that synthetic life will provide cheap energy and may be our best bet to combat climate change. BP (Beyond/British Petroleum) has just invested \$500 million at the University of California-Berkeley (USA) to develop a synbio approach for creating an alternative fuel source. They’re thinking it may be possible to quickly move beyond second-generation agrofuels by creating a fuel-producing microbe. In 2005, Craig Venter – who is also receiving funding from BP – founded Synthetic Genomics, Inc. to commercialize synthetic microbes for use in energy, agriculture and climate change remediation (he’s imagining a CO<sub>2</sub>-eating microbe). In the June 4 issue of *Newsweek*, Venter boasted, “If we made an organism that produced fuel, that could be the first billion- or trillion-dollar organism.” Others have been developing synthetic microbes to produce natural products such as rubber or artemisinin – the active compound in effective malaria treatments, which is currently extracted from the leaves of a sweet wormwood tree called *Artemisia annua*.

As gene synthesis becomes cheaper and faster, synthetic biologists claim that it will become easier to synthesize a microbe than to find it in nature or retrieve it from a gene bank. Biological samples, sequenced and stored in digital form, will move instantaneously across the globe and be resurrected in labs thousands of miles away.

Synthetic biologists (the majority are trained in computer science and engineering – not biology) are forging ahead with their plans to create synthetic life, in the absence of societal debate and regulatory oversight. Synthetic biology raises urgent questions at the heart of the CBD’s programme of work, such as: What will be the impact of synthetic organisms on conservation and use of

biodiversity? Will the CBD’s Cartagena Protocol on transboundary movement of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) apply to *synthetic* living organisms?

## **COP 9 = Naturschutzkonferenz?**

The slogan for the forthcoming COP 9 of this Convention is being called „Naturschutzkonferenz“ (referring to Nature conservation) in the German context. Um, what about the other objectives of the convention? Have we gone backwards in time to ‘wilderness protection’?

## **Networking for COP 9**

The *German League for Nature Conservation* and the *German NGO Forum on Environment and Development* began a joint project on April 15 preparing civil society activities for COP 9 in Bonn. It is supported by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with funds of the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

We will support civil society initiatives on national, European and international levels and inform the German public about the CBD’s aims and tasks. We want to get people with different backgrounds involved in workshops, pre-conferences, discussions and email information exchange on the issues.

To strengthen civil society lobbying we will help to collect and distribute information on the following key issues: protected areas, financial mechanisms, agricultural biodiversity and biosafety, access and benefit sharing, and implementation of the Convention.

Communication will be organized both by email and by the new project website [www.biodiv-network.de](http://www.biodiv-network.de) where you can find news, position papers, background information, event announcements and links in English, Spanish and German.

If you want to join “Networking for Biodiversity 2008” get in contact with our NGO CBD project office in Bonn: go on the website, write an email or give us a call. We try to help you and get you involved in the network. Please also get in touch with the CBD Alliance – an international network of civil society groups working on CBD issues – [www.cbdalliance.org](http://www.cbdalliance.org)

We hope to see you in Bonn 2008!

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